



COVID-19's Impact on K-12 Education

The pandemic upended education, and academic impacts must be addressed

BACKGROUND

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) oversees K-12 education. In March 2020, the education of 1.7 million public school students was disrupted when the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in statewide school closures. Although many students returned to the classroom the following school year, disruptions continued to impact student learning.

To address COVID-19's impact, GaDOE and local school systems were awarded approximately \$6.6 billion in federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. The most recent allocations under the American Rescue Plan included \$425 million in state set-aside funds and \$3.8 billion in local allocations that are available through September 2024.

Grant Program	Grant Period Through	Carryover Period Through	Funding Amount		
			State Set-Aside	Local Allocation	Total
ESSER I (CARES)	Sept 2021	Sept 2022	\$45,716,985	\$411,452,867	\$457,169,852
ESSER II (CRRSA)	Sept 2022	Sept 2023	\$189,209,262	\$1,702,883,356	\$1,892,092,618
ARP ESSER	Sept 2023	Sept 2024	\$425,243,169	\$3,827,188,522	\$4,252,431,691
Total			\$660,169,416	\$5,941,524,745	\$6,601,694,161

Source: US DOE Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To monitor and address learning losses, GaDOE should:

- Continue to explore innovative student assessment systems and improve statewide data collection
- Continue to assess student needs and refine statewide strategies for addressing learning loss
- Provide additional guidance and oversight to ensure local school systems allocate funds effectively and implement interventions according to best practices

KEY FINDINGS

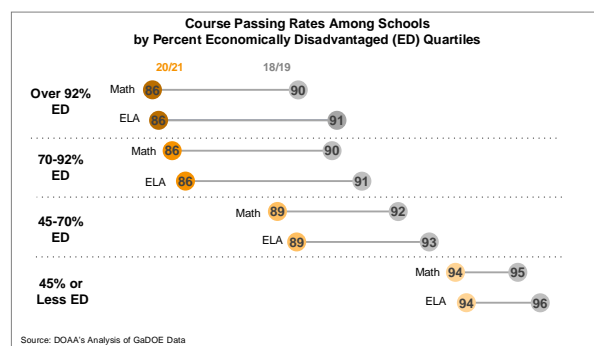
COVID-19 significantly altered the 20-21 school year, as many students continued to learn virtually for part or all of the year. The learning gaps continued to grow and could further compound over time, impacting long-term academic outcomes. To mitigate this risk, GaDOE must ensure that American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds, which include \$3.8 billion in local allocations and \$425 million in state set-aside funds, are utilized effectively.

COVID-19 disrupted learning during the 20-21 school year.

- Teachers reported that virtual learning was less effective as school systems encountered challenges related to technology, teacher training, services to vulnerable populations, and the need for parent/caregiver support.
- Instructional time was often reduced because school systems shortened school days, switched to four-day school weeks, and/or shortened the school year. Students also lost in-person instructional time due to quarantine requirements, illness, and temporary school closures.

Learning disruptions negatively impacted enrollment, student engagement, and academic achievement.

- Between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020, the number of full-time equivalent students decreased by approximately 39,700 (2.2%), with more significant declines among younger students and systems that delayed in-person learning.
- Teachers surveyed indicated students were less engaged in terms of attending class, actively participating in class, and completing assignments and homework.
- Course passing rates declined in all grade levels, averaging a 3.7 percentage point decline in English language arts and a 3.2 percentage point decline in math. Declines were more significant among schools with high proportions of economically disadvantaged students.



Robust strategies are needed to monitor and address the learning loss.

- GaDOE plans to utilize \$425 million in ARP funds for initiatives including data system improvements, expanded learning time, tutoring, and teacher recruitment/retention programs. Although these areas are emphasized in the best practice research, specific components within each category could be bolstered.
- Local school systems plan to utilize \$3.8 billion in ARP funds for activities to address learning loss (e.g., summer school) and to address other needs (e.g., sanitation supplies and training). We found significant variation in the percentage of funds allocated to learning loss strategies (versus other activities), as well as outliers in subcategories.